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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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10 April 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council  
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Fritz W. Ermarth  
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT: Portrait of Soviet POWs/Deserters in Afghanistan

*Worth reading!*  
*Re.*

1. Attached is a particularly extensive and vivid interview done by Radio Liberty with a Soviet deserter in Afghan hands. He describes conditions faced by Soviet troops and their attitudes toward the war. Particularly of note (page 7) is the belief, or wish to believe, that there is a "free Russian" unit fighting with the Mujaheddin somewhere in Afghanistan.

2. FYI: The "special section" or "specials" to which the soldier refers on pages 11-14 are the KGB organs (osobiye otdeli) responsible for security throughout Soviet ranks.

*Fritz W. Ermarth*  
Fritz W. Ermarth

cc: NIO/NESA  
DDO/C/NE Division

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*radio liberty research*

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**A SOVIET SOLDIER OPTS OUT IN AFGHANISTAN\***

Note: The following is a translation of one of a series of interviews conducted by a Radio Liberty correspondent with former Soviet servicemen who served in Afghanistan. The original interview was broadcast by Radio Liberty on February 27 and 28, 1984.

Announcer: Radio Liberty correspondent Fatima Salkazanova has returned from the city of Peshawar in Pakistan on the border with Afghanistan. She spent almost three weeks in Peshawar. During her assignment she interviewed six former Soviet servicemen. Five of them crossed over voluntarily to the side of the Afghan insurgents. The sixth was taken prisoner. You will now hear Fatima Salkazanova's interview with Vladislav Naumov.

Salkazanova: Vladislav Naumov answered all my questions in great detail. The interview naturally began with questions about himself: who he is, where he studied, and what kind of education did he manage to get before being drafted into the army.

Naumov: My name is Vladislav Naumov. I was born in the city of Volgograd, the former Stalingrad. I am twenty-one years old. I grew up and went to school in Volgograd. After secondary school, which I completed in 1979, I enrolled at the Astrakhan Marine College, from which I graduated with a navigator-engineer's certificate and with an assignment to the Volga-Gorky Shipping Company. From there I was drafted into the army on October 1, 1982. Although my qualifications were related directly to the navy, I ended up serving in Afghanistan.

Salkazanova: Many Soviet soldiers whom I have met in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan had received no training before being sent to Afghanistan. Vladislav Naumov was lucky; he had received basic military training.

Naumov: A lot of attention is paid to military training in the Soviet Union. In all secondary schools, vocational-technical schools, and technical institutes, Soviet young people are given military instruction in accordance with the Communist claim that "the enemy never sleeps." It is a first priority of Soviet education that schools, technical institutes, and universities should graduate fanatical Communists. Those who do well in this respect--that is, those who mature under the influence of

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Communist slogans--are encouraged and move ahead successfully in their subsequent jobs. In the final analysis, however, the preliminary military training does not provide any practical military skills because young people are not at all interested in war. Today's Soviet young people have their own more important problems to face at every step in their lives. The preliminary military training is, I think, regarded more as ideological training than as military practice.

Salkazanova: I asked Vladislav Naumov what he had known about Afghanistan before being drafted into the army and what he had known about the war in that country before he arrived there.

Naumov: I would like to answer this question by citing one example. In 1981, I met a chap in the "Ostrava" restaurant in Volgograd. He was very drunk and, as a result, was not in control of himself. In his rage, he burst out with imprecations against Soviet officers. Sitting on the steps of the restaurant building, he told me that Russian lads, eighteen to twenty years old, were dying in Afghanistan, and that the whole war was a senseless waste of time. He had a lot of bad things to say about the insurgents too, but he did not spare the Soviet government as the cause of all this madness. I learned from this conversation that the life of our soldiers in Afghanistan was no picnic, and later I found out at first hand that the whole burden of the war falls on the enlisted men, who are fobbed off with medals and decorations--as if this could substitute for the deaths of their comrades and innocent Afghan people. As regards the press, the first article I read was in Komsomol'skaya pravda. That article immediately provoked debates about the tasks of our soldiers in Afghanistan. The press, of course, writes very little about Afghanistan. Even now, with the war at its height and the situation of our lads becoming more and more difficult with every day that passes, the Soviet people think that things are returning to normal in Afghanistan and that our contingent is serving under the same conditions as it would in one of the people's democracies. People learn virtually nothing about the unjust war from newspapers and magazines. The Soviet people have become so indifferent to the international situation that they are not in the least interested in what is going on in the world. Young people, for instance, do not read newspapers, because they are uninteresting. The ground for this cold indifference is prepared by the propaganda of red stars, slogans, and posters hanging everywhere. As a result, the war is only known to those people who have been directly affected by the Afghan problem--the soldiers themselves and the mothers who are the recipients of the white zinc coffins.

Salkazanova: Please tell us how you were drafted into the army, how and from whom you learned that you were being sent to Afghanistan, and what kind of punishment would have awaited you

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if you had refused to participate in this war. In answer to my question, Vladislav Naumov replied:

Naumov: After I received the summons from the military registration office--which I had to sign for on the doorstep so that I could not delay reporting for duty--I was called in to the draft office for a talk, together with my relatives. At the draft office, those of us who were draftees were told that we would be doing our service at the front. In other words, they gave us to understand that we would be sent to Afghanistan but, at the same time, avoided any direct mention of the war. The conditions at the recruiting center were terrible. The so-called medical commission rubber-stamped the words "fit for travel" without any checkups or questions. Finally, towards evening, the whole crowd of draftees was loaded to the gills. There was a great commotion at the recruiting center, with much cursing and fist fights. In order to cope with this wild behavior, the people in charge of the recruiting center had to call in mounted police. The draftees then realized that the police constituted no great obstacle to them and pelted them with empty bottles and curses. Towards nightfall, everyone collapsed exhausted, and at this point we were collected without resistance and taken to buses that drove us to the railroad station, where a train had been readied beforehand.

I learned about going abroad only after being told the number of my travel orders. All those who received orders with the number 280 were being sent abroad, to the people's democracies or to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Later, the officers often tried to scare us by mentioning Afghanistan. The soldiers who accompanied our troop train kept on telling us: "Hang yourselves." We did not know who had made the decisions about us, but I can definitely say that my name was one of the first on the list at the recruiting center. I think that they had been watching me even before I was drafted, that an eye had been kept on me ever since school. At school I had practiced shooting and immediately gained a third-class rating. I also practiced karate, so I was already becoming what our warriors wanted me to be.

At Termez we built models of Afghan villages. Before every combat exercise, Major Makarov would constantly repeat: "Look in the direction of the village; there are the 'dushmans.'\* Forward! Kill them! They kill completely innocent people." And then the truly punitive operations would start. To begin with, we were armed to the teeth; some even rolled up the sleeves of their camouflage cloaks. Then we would attach the bayonets and

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\*This is the Persian word for enemy. It is what is used in the Soviet press to refer to Afghan freedom fighters.



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silencers to our sharpshooter rifles and join the line. Under the cover of the infantry's combat vehicles we would raze the village to the ground. Then, working under the scorching sun, we would rebuild the model, all over again. We had training during the nights also. Without a sound we would capture house after house, fortress after fortress, we had bayonets and silencers attached to our rifles, and we learned to use them pretty skillfully. The major often repeated Suvorov's words: "The bullet is a fool, the bayonet--a stalwart. Hit with the bayonet and try to turn it around in the body." At Termez, they did not hide from us that we were being trained for Afghanistan. On the contrary, during these exercises we used combat arms--the same as we had in Afghanistan. Before the oath I could still have avoided service in Afghanistan, but after having been sworn in, I would have risked prison or a disciplinary battalion. The soldiers believe that it is better to spend a year in prison or a camp than serve one month in the disciplinary battalion. One can draw the conclusion from this just what a disciplinary battalion is like.

Salkazanova: While sending soldiers to war, the Soviet military chiefs don't even consider it necessary to tell them where they are being sent. Listen to the story of the young Soviet serviceman Vladislav Naumov's flight to Afghanistan.

Naumov: From the city of Ashkhabad, I was shipped to Afghanistan aboard a plane. Although everyone knew where we were being taken to, Captain Knyaev, who was accompanying, us repeatedly talked of Poland for some reason. Knowing a little of what was going on in Poland, none of us had practically any doubt about our actual destination, but there was no firm opinion about it. The pilot would come out and say: "We're flying over the Alps." He was joking, but there was nothing improbable about this. Then he said: "We're flying over Poland," and, finally, when we were nearing the end of our flight, he came out of the pilot's cabin and informed us that we had landed in Warsaw. Only later did we learn that we were in Kabul, and this was because we met a group of soldiers, decorated with medals and orders, who were being discharged. There were several wounded among them.

Salkazanova: Former Soviet soldier Vladislav Naumov is telling us about his service in Afghanistan, about relations between veterans and rookies, between soldiers and officers.

Naumov: In Afghanistan, I was sent to serve in the city of Jalalabad and was assigned to the large 66th Brigade. Jalalabad is considered to be a hot spot--there is hardly any difference between Jalalabad and Kandahar. The soldiers used to recite this verse: "If you want a bullet in your butt, then take a trip to Jalalabad." The first thing that we faced in Jalalabad was the freedom of action on the part of the insurgents. For Soviet soldiers the territory in Afghanistan is too limited. Only 18

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percent of the territory is under occupation. On May Day, the insurgents opened mortar fire. Shells fell next to the tents occupied by soldiers. There were dead and wounded. The number of dead and wounded was concealed from us. It is very difficult to estimate the number of casualties in Afghanistan, as in Jalalabad alone two or three and maybe even more persons are killed every week. The estimate provided by Western experts--twenty to twenty-five thousand--is just a fraction of the casualties. What can Western theoreticians say without leaving their offices? I would better advise them to set up an organization for rescuing the servicemen and providing material aid. This would be more effective.

The question of relations among soldiers--between the so-called old men and the young ones--is the principal scourge as far as "the limited contingent" is concerned. In this connection, one may accord the first place to nationality relations between officers and men. Commanding officers often take advantage of this to maintain order and discipline. One officer, for example, told me that he prefers to staff his company with Georgians. Here it may be noted that soldiers are recruited into companies so as to form national majorities and in order of their being drafted. For example, the company's commanding officer would take only Russians first, but second time around he would take young Turkmen soldiers. And here national tensions would begin. Finally, the first Russian recruits are discharged and the Turkmen, who by this time had been trained by blows from the Russians, become "old men," and the commanding officer then gets a new complement consisting exclusively of Russian soldiers this time. And a new round of humiliations begins. From this, one can draw the conclusion that officers are interested in maintaining such a state of affairs, they are the real instigators of antagonisms, and this is why there is no unity among soldiers and why they cannot present their suggestions and complaints en masse, as a body. In the Soviet army, soldiers prefer to be each for himself and not one for all. As far as the officers are concerned, the soldiers simply hate them; only in exceptional cases are they respected or appreciated.

Salkazanov: It is being said that Soviet soldiers are the neediest soldiers in the world and that the system of "self-supply" is very popular in the Soviet army--even in Afghanistan. Is this true?

Naumov: Yes, soldiers try in any possible way to procure what is necessary. Mainly it is watches, jeans, and various trinkets that fill the Afghan shops to overflow. Many buy mummyo,\* ciga-

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\*This is a kind of dried mushroom that is reputed to be a remedy for a number of illnesses.

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rettes, drugs, vodka, "Diplomat" briefcases. Where do the soldiers get Afghan currency? During punitive expeditions, they engage not only in extermination but also in plunder. A countryman of mine--an officer who had been on a first-name basis with me--used to tell me that his soldiers had a lot of money. "They plunder, but I do not put a stop to them." The second method--the most popular one--consists of selling things. I have already mentioned that everything is for sale by everybody. The commanding officer of a tank battalion took a whole fortune home with him. He used to deal in diesel oil. To judge by everything, the system of "self-supply" does not apply here. It is rather a system of plundering, profiteering and fraud.

Salkazanova: Former Soviet serviceman Vladislav Naumov, who has defected to the side of the Afghan resistance fighters, is telling us about the morale of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan and the way they spend their free time.

Naumov: In the evenings we usually congregated around our combat vehicle; played the guitar and sang songs about our home, our town; exchanged memories about the girls we loved, our relatives, and our friends. We also sang about Afghanistan. Here, for example, I will recite one quatrain:

I'm going away, said the young lad through tears,  
I'm going away, but I'll be back in two years.  
The soldier's gone, not having seen the first spring.  
He returned in a soldier's coffin made of zinc.

In a general sense, the songs that are sung now by soldiers in Afghanistan resemble each other: they tell of fallen friends, of tough battles, of the living conditions encountered in Afghanistan. What can one add to this? The officers, of course, confiscate song books and notebooks, which are so cherished by the soldiers, but even the officers sing these songs secretly, away from the soldiers. I know of one junior officer who has made a point of collecting songs about Afghanistan. I often shared guard duty with him and involuntarily I heard all the songs that he had been able to collect. It is the same songs as sung by soldiers. All that I have told you is just a small fraction--i.e., only an aspect--of the life of the Soviet contingent DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan).

The mood of the Soviet soldier? The first thing that strikes one is total indifference. This indifference can be noticed in combat, in one's treatment of military technology. Of course, the soldiers are unhappy with the war and with Afghanistan on the whole. I believe that if this continues much longer, the results will be very costly for those who have cooked up this mess. It seems to me that the soldiers need only some officer leaders to turn their arms in the other direction. It is now



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time to pay attention to Afghanistan. What is needed is only a beginning and then, I think, the soldiers themselves will start joining the insurgents. Of course, this depends not only on the soldiers but on the officers as well. And, first and foremost, this depends on the West. One should counter propaganda. It is the Communist regime's only base. This is its root. And if you cut the roots, something unprecedented may happen. Thus one could liberate not only the Afghan people but Russia itself. There are rumors circulating among soldiers about a free Russian unit in Afghanistan. Vadim Plotnikov, for example, left his detachment in order to find this unit. Maybe it does not exist, but the soldiers want it to be. Many claim to have seen it. According to rumors, this unit was formed by soldiers from our Jalalabad brigade.

Salkazanova: Do the Soviet soldiers believe that they are fighting in Afghanistan against former mercenaries?

Naumov: The myth about mercenaries has been shattered, as the saying goes. The soldiers know that at present there are no foreign forces in Afghanistan, with the exception of the Soviet ones. The officers allege that Afghanistan is swarmed with foreign forces. During one operation, the officer cried to us: "Look, the mercenaries!" I looked through my rifle's telescopic sight. People in uniform were moving in my direction, and their actions bore no resemblance to those of ordinary insurgents. One could see that the soldiers had completed military training. Several other snipers--friends of mine--were sitting next to me. The junior officer asked us to be more attentive and to hit the bull's eye, as they say. I fired a shot, and a so-called mercenary fell to the ground. When we reached the body, we saw that it was an Afghan in a liberation uniform. The officer, who had alleged that this was a mercenary, fell silent.

Salkazanova: And what do the Soviet soldiers tell about their combat "deeds," about their "heroic" actions in Afghanistan?

Naumov: Those soldiers who have been in combat talk about their adventures mainly to young and inexperienced troops. One will not hear such talk among themselves--i.e., among the veterans. Of course, some soldiers want to avenge the death of their comrades by striking at the insurgents, but let's not hurry with conclusions. For they also know whose fault it really is, but one can understand them. And as for deeds...What kind of deeds are possible in this war? Maybe just that we tried to rescue each other's life. But in combat one has no choice. They shoot at you, and you shoot back in order to survive.

Salkazanova: Everyone knows what punitive operations are all about. These are the operations undertaken by the Soviet army in reprisal for every operation undertaken by the Mujahiden, the

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Afghan resistance fighters. It is not the Mujahiden who fall victims to these reprisals, though, but the peaceful inhabitants of the neighboring villages--children, women, and old men who take no part in combat. I asked Vladislav Naumov what he knew about these punitive operations.

Naumov: I have already talked a little about punitive operations, and therefore I am not going to dwell on this question. I am ashamed of my past. I don't talk about it to anyone; I think, you understand why. Let's skip over this question, Fatima, if at all possible. The only thing I can say to you is that I am guilty of this. Still, I would like to recount a small episode related to this topic.

In May, 1983, I arrived at the post guarding a certain section of the Kabul-Jalalabad road. Not having yet familiarized myself with the post, I was doing repair work on two combat vehicles. These two tanks had been knocked out during one of the punitive expeditions. The damages were slight, and I quickly finished the job in one day. I still had the evening and the morning to myself. During the night I had to do guard duty like everyone else. I took a bath, changed, and waited for supper. There was still plenty of time until supper and I was loitering about the post. All of a sudden I heard crude cursing from beyond the crossing. The cursing was so loud that everybody around stopped working and looked at the mound where two soldiers were chasing a man whose hands were tied. The man's face was swollen, there were fresh scratches, his mouth was bleeding. Having brought the man to the tanks, they forced the Afghan prisoner to his knees. "Well, what shall we do with him?" There came two junior officers. They were very drunk, and it seemed that they were supporting each other in order not to fall down. The tall soldier reported to the drunken officer about the prisoner. The officer looked at the Afghan and, smiling crookedly, said: "This beast is unworthy of prison. As soldiers, we must shoot him." "No," mumbled the second officer, "such a bitch must be hung in the sun with his head down so that he can slowly realize who he decided to fight against." "Hey, you rotten soul! What's happening here?" asked a lieutenant who had just arrived on the scene. "We have caught a ghost," quickly rapped out the words of the tall soldier. The Afghan was squatting on his knees and was wiping blood from his face with his tied hands. "Well, we'll square the accounts with you yet...Shoot him!" commanded the officer. The same two soldiers lifted the man and dragged him to the combat vehicle. "Bring an automatic rifle," commanded the lieutenant. The Afghan realized what was happening and started saying something in his own language. No one listened to him. Everybody stood around and watched, waiting to see what came next. "Automatic rifles are under lock," reported the tall one. "All right, we'll manage without a bullet. C'mon, boys, let's lift him closer to the

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gun." The officer climbed into the turret. The soldiers hung the Afghan on the gun barrel by wrapping his tied hands around it. "Load!"--came the order. The gun's bolt clicked. "Move aside!"--hollered the officer. "Disperse!" The order again: "Fire!" The gun roared. A cloud of smoke and dust hung over the combat vehicle. There was silence. When the smoke died away, there was no one hanging on the gun barrel. The shell had blown away the man's whole body. We all dispersed. There was a dog running around us that was obviously mad with hunger. It was growling and whining. I went to the mess hall in the hope of getting some food soon. My hope came true and, having filled half of my mess kit with porridge, if you can call it that, I trudged along to get some tea and stood in line waiting. While waiting, I ate half my porridge. Next to me there stood a bespectacled sergeant. And suddenly this sergeant cried: "Hey, hey, go away, you dirty beast!" I didn't quite get what happened. There in front of me stood the dog with a chunk of meat in its teeth. I looked closer and saw that it had brought the head of the man that had been shot. Just a glance at this head was enough to make me choke on my food. In rage I threw my mess kit aside and went away, but the others continued eating as if nothing had happened.

Salkazanov: Is it true that there are many drug addicts among the Soviet soldiers? Is it true that more Soviet soldiers are dying from disease than from the bullets of the Afghan insurgents?

Naumov: Little notice is paid to breaches of army discipline in the Fortieth Army. For beating a young soldier half to death a regular may only be cautioned by an officer. Drugs? Nobody can deal with them because a great deal of drugs are being used. There are these tablets. For the most part they smoke hashish and cocaine. There are also those who shoot. There are not many of them, of course, but there are some. The soldiers get hold of drugs by means of sale and exchange. They sell literally everything possible: fat, butter, canned goods, soap, hardware, and arms and ammunition.

One could talk forever about the living conditions of the Soviet soldier in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. I will not touch on all the problems; I am writing a book about this. I would like to read some excerpts from my drafts.

"In July it was terribly hot. The thermometer crept over 60 degrees. We took refuge from this hell either in the river or in a smoking area where a camouflage net had been spread out. We quickly became weak and dried out in the heat. At that time the sick bays were not in a position to accept people with heat stroke. I know of nine cases of heat stroke that proved fatal. How many soldiers altogether have died in Afghanistan not from

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bullets but from disease and the negligence of their commanders? More than half, I am sure. The diagnoses were: first, heat stroke--every one of us had that: vomiting, severe giddiness, high temperature, stomach pains, all the symptoms of dysentery; the doctors took heat stroke for dysentery and packed the sick off to the infectious section. Second, pneumonia--it's not considered a disease in Afghanistan. To this day I have no idea whether it is an infectious disease or not. I lay in the infectious section with pneumonia. They discharged me on the fourth day when my temperature fell. The doctor I ended up with in reception could not even establish a diagnosis. 'All the symptoms of typhus,' he said. 'My lung hurts,' I corrected him. He listened to me and wrote pneumonia in my case history.

"On one operation we sat in the mountains for seven hours without water in 65-degree heat under the open sky. Sat, or rather stood, because it was impossible to sit, in the proper sense of the word, on the rock. It was red-hot like a stove. but our commander, of course, had water and food, and they provided him with shelter from the heat with a shroud tent. I repeat, we sat there seven hours, and then a signal came: 'Operation canceled, all back to base.' Down below there was a small mountain rivulet. The soldiers went leaping down from the mountains to the water. We avidly drank our fill of water, and the sweat poured off us. Our clothing got soaked and then dried out and became white from the crystals of salt that dried on it. Some jumped straight into the water with their clothes on in order to wash off the sweat and dirt. They either had a cardiac arrest or brain hemorrhage from the abrupt fall in temperature. Many lost consciousness. Those who had not gone into the water grabbed them and dragged them out just so they would survive. Another diagnosis is no less dangerous and serious. That is Botkin's disease, jaundice, or hepatitis in Latin. In Afghanistan almost everybody caught hepatitis--some two or three times. A person who has contracted hepatitis remains a cripple for life. This disease is highly infectious. It is enough for one to catch it, and you have a whole epidemic that is impossible to stop. The doctors are faced with the problem of what to do. Two or three wounded, and during an operation maybe ten or fifteen, but the rest, even in the surgical section, are down with hepatitis. Some soldiers have whole bunches of diseases. Andrei Gulkov, for instance, had a broken rib, jaundice, and malaria. You have typhus and jaundice, dysentery and pneumonia, and so on. In some areas of Afghanistan oriental boils are rampant. The bites of Leishmanian midges leave deep sores, and there are lice all year round. Lice are the scourge of the Soviet army." Well, perhaps that's enough of excerpts.

Salkazanova: Do the Soviet soldiers know about the fate of defectors?

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Naumov: Many talk about defectors and think that the insurgents take revenge on them right away. Officers often cited examples of such actions by the partisans. So those who defect are those in quite a hopeless situation. To me it was all the same whether they killed me or not. The soldiers know nothing of prisoners of war. Can there really be prisoners? They kill them all. This is also the influence of political studies. So it is very difficult to get taken prisoner in battle. What question can there be? Some soldiers leave the last bullet for themselves.

Salkazanov: I asked Vladislav Naumov to describe what methods and what weapons the Soviet forces use to fight the soldiers of the Afghan liberation movement.

Naumov: Many people are talking about scorched earth tactics all over the world. This war is very much like the war against the Basmachi--only technology is employed, of course, in all its applications. The main weapon, obviously, is the air force. Mi-8 and -24 helicopters operate very effectively. The BM-23 rocket launchers, code-named "Grad," are used. The rocket warheads are filled with napalm. Napalm is widely used in Afghanistan. The artillery shells are for the most part all fragmentation mortar shells. Aerial cluster bombs are also used. Thirty or fifty small charges--ten-kilogram bombs--separate from one bomb, and these destroy one square kilometer of terrain. An operation begins with an artillery and "Grad" rocket barrage, then the helicopters are used; they bomb one specific area. Behind them, under cover of armored vehicles, come the infantry and assault troops that carry out the bloody reprisals in Afghan villages.

Salkazanov: When, how, and why did you get the desire to go over to the side of the Afghan insurgents, and how did you realize this desire?

Naumov: On one occasion an Afghan came to me and asked if I couldn't steal some ammunition and arms for him. I refused, but I thought that he could still be of use to me, so I didn't report him. Then all this story with the food started. The partisans cut the road that linked us with Kabul. There began to be interruptions in the supply of foodstuffs. In the dining hall they gave us porridge teeming with insects and a revolting puree made of rotten maggoty potatoes. I suggested to the lads that we refuse to eat it. That day nobody did eat it. Then I was called to the special section. An officer threatened me. I had developed a downright hatred of our commanders. They ate decent food, they and their toadies. I helped the Afghans with arms and ammunition. Of course, I never took money from them for it, but then the KGB discovered me all the same. I couldn't stand the nervous strain and ran. They caught me after three days.



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Already by then I had firmly resolved to escape when any suitable chance offered itself. They caught me and put me in the brigade prison. There I was severely beaten and made a monkey of. I spent a month in solitary, in a cell two meters by one. The specials wanted to finish me off. In all this time I ate two loaves of black bread and drank sixty mugs of water. After that diet I lost nearly forty kilograms. In the cell it was dark. During the day it was very hot and stuffy from the evaporation of water heavily charged with chlorine that they continually poured over me. Outside it was terribly hot, and the water evaporated on one's eyes and the chlorine bit into one's eyes. My whole body itched from the lice, and my hands were permanently tied. Stuck in all this filth, enduring the nightmare of night attacks, seeing what the officers ate and what they fed us with, the fear of death, the disgust at the orders we were given, at the murders, at the bombing of villages--how, after all that, could one believe that the USSR is the finest, the most just, the greatest country in the world.

I was born in Russia and escaped from it. I simply could not take all this horror. I had a little longer to sit in that cell and then my path would lead to Kabul, to the central army prison. Finally, one fine day, the door was thrown open and an escort ordered "Out!" I went out. I was taken through a long corridor to the street. At the gates stood a GAZ-24. "Get in!" ordered a lieutenant. I got in. Two soldiers sat down on the sides. The car started. The lieutenant asked me, "Have you any complaints?" "No," I replied. I was sitting on the back seat and sweat poured off me in streams. The car stopped at the special section. "Out!" I got out and they took me to an office. There was nobody in the office. I sat there alone. There was water standing on the table. I had a great desire to drink, an overpowering desire to drink. A major opened the door. He came in and sat down opposite me behind a large writing desk. The major began the conversation gently and calmly; he even pretended that he sympathized with me. "Come on now, let's introduce ourselves. I'm Major Miroshnik, an investigator of the special section." "Vladislav Naumov." "Fine, now we know each other. Think carefully and try to remember everything that the man you passed the arms to asked you about." I suddenly had the bright idea that I need not hurry because I had Kabul waiting for me. I said that he had asked me some details but I had told him nothing. I realized that the major was a chekist, that he was not in the least interested in the arms; he did not ask me even once how many and what I had passed on. The major adopted a very restrained and tactical stance. "So, Vladislav, you must help us; we must catch your friend. You see, this matter is rather more complicated than you think. This man may have been recruited by the Pakistani or some other intelligence service. We must catch him." "Yes, I understand." "So you must meet with him, understand? You definitely must meet with him, but there's the

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question how. I don't have time now but tomorrow we will try to think something up." They drove me back again to the prison. With these conversations I had missed dinner and supper, the whole day I had had nothing to eat. I asked the escort for some bread, my ration. In reply I got one in the liver. "Had enough?" "Yes, thanks." The following day the car came at the same time. They took me to the same place, into the same office. The major met me with a smile. "Come over to me!" He chatted to me, as to a friend or someone even closer. I sat down on the chair. The major moved his desk closer to me, spread out a newspaper and brought out from somewhere a can of stew and a piece of white bread, an onion, and salt. I set about opening the can, and the major came to help me. "Eat up, eat up, and when you have had a bit to eat, lie down and sleep, rest, we have much to do today." I had something to eat, wrapped up the remains in the newspaper, lay down on a big couch, and fell asleep there. I was roused by the major, who had a hunting knife in his hands. "This is for you. Take it with you whatever happens. After all, he may not come alone and he may be armed. If you notice he has a weapon, don't be afraid, stick it in boldly, but not to kill. I need him." The major's eyes flashed with the excitement of a hunter. "Now, don't hesitate. If you catch him, I'll put in a word for you. After all, he's guilty too, and why should you take all the responsibility alone?" Miroshnik took me for a child, he thought I would sell out Akhmat to get a lesser term for myself. But in this case it was the gallows. We reached the place. Miroshnik posted guards and then kept me covered. I saw all this and did not dare to make any unnecessary movement.

Announcer: This is Radio Liberty. You are listening to an interview with former Soviet serviceman Vladislav Naumov, who in the fall of last year went over to the side of the Afghan insurgents. We continue the broadcast.

Naumov: I had prepared my flight carefully. In the cell I had thought out every detail, counted the steps, the minutes, the seconds. For safety's sake I had decided to postpone my flight until evening. It got dark quickly and that would help me. Miroshnik's car pulled up, I was brought out of the cell, and we set off. The major ordered the car to stop a hundred meters from the place. I got out of the car and went over to my former tank, sat down on the turret, and waited for darkness. Beside me, leaning on the machine gun, sat a friend of mine, from the same part of the country, a fine chap. I am very fond of him. He brought me a can of water and a packet of sugar. "Eat, eat, while nobody is here. If anyone comes, I'll let you know. Ah, Vladya, what is to become of you! If you can, run! The lads won't shoot at you. My advice to you," he repeated, "is run! Run, you'll be alive, and there you'll see." My heart ached at the idea of parting from Andrei, from my bosom friend. More than once we had covered each other in battle, together we had fed the

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lice, were face to face with death, shared our joys and sorrow. For another hour we sat there and chatted, and then Miroshnik came up to us. Andrei had been dragged into my case, and I knew that, if I were to get away, I would be saving both myself, and him, and another comrade. Miroshnik came up: "Right, off you go, don't dally. And you keep a good watch and, if there's anything, cut off the road with the machine gun. If he runs, mow him down." When the major uttered these words, I had already moved a little way away from the tank, but the major spoke especially loudly so that I could hear what was in store for me. I went on. I moved further and further. And then there came Miroshnik's savage roar: "What are you looking at, you brutes, fire, fire, get on with it!" But the machine gun remained silent. Behind me, at three times my height, tracer bullets flew over my head; my friends were seeing me off. What became of Andrei, I do not know. But Miroshnik was put away. For how long? But is that important? Subsequently, when I was already in safety, the KGB offered the commander of the detachment to which I went over a large sum of money, but that man was very fond of me and quite simply answered the KGB: "Even if you promise me all of Moscow, I will not hand back people to be tortured."

In that man's family, I got to know his brother, a fine, bold and courageous man. He endured the purges of Amin and Taraki, and Karmal, of course, locked him up in prison, where they tortured him with the electric shock treatment. He began to lose his sight from these tortures. The KGB was involved in that, of course, too.

Salkazanova: And how is the war in Afghanistan affecting the minds of Soviet young people?

Naumov: Of course, this war does not have such a strong influence. I mean on all Soviet young people. As regards those who have fought in Afghanistan, they are for some reason regarded as the silent ones. Among those of his own age, among his friends, such a one does, of course, enjoy some authority, but when it comes to talking about the war, he doesn't. As a rule, these people sign an undertaking not to talk. In general, of course, the Soviet army does influence the minds of young people. After the army, a person becomes shy because he has fallen two or three years behind people of his own age. As a rule, in the army young people lose their identity, which is, of course, advantageous for our political leadership. If someone gets to thinking, let him think, but he does not dare to voice his thoughts because he knows from the example of the army how deeply he can get in the mire. I think that the Soviet army is the epicenter of the destruction of a man's character. And I am not going to conceal the fact that very few young people after the army continue their studies in secondary technical or higher institutions. The army,

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as a rule, destroys a man--that is, the Man in him--with its slavish, overwhelming toil. In a company, for example, there are 120 men of various ages. The sergeant, who is the direct commander for the private, is eighteen or nineteen. The one who is given the orders is twenty-seven. These luckless ones, who end up in the army after going to an institute, endure humiliation not only from the sergeants but also from the regulars. Of course, at twenty-six or twenty-seven, it is already difficult to break a person's character, but I have seen some who have run to wash the socks of the regulars. And such a man has a wife and child at home.

Salkazanova: According to reports from the Soviet Union, very many Soviet draftees voluntarily write applications to be sent to the war in Afghanistan. How do you explain this?

Naumov: Yes, many do write to be sent to Afghanistan. How can I explain it to you? In my view, they are people who have absolutely no idea of what Afghanistan is about. Such people are, as a rule, the victims of romantic ideas about glory. I can tell them that war is no game of summer lightning. There is very little romantic about it. In the final analysis there are times when glory and romantics have to be paid for with one's life. To judge from such applications, one can say that Soviet citizens know very little about the unjust war in Afghanistan.

Salkazanova: Have you heard that Nikolai Ryzhkov and Aleksandr Voronov, who also went over to the side of the insurgents in Afghanistan, are now living in America? Vladislav Naumov replied:

Naumov: Yes, we read in the newspaper Russkaya mysl, which we receive regularly, that Resistance International carried out this very complicated and very useful operation. I think that a little more attention needs to be paid to such things. Of course, this is a major and very useful work. We are, after all, Russians, and we must take a direct part in liberating our homeland. Just by the fact that we are living witnesses of the war the USSR is waging in Afghanistan, we have annoyed our political leadership. What would we like to advise or wish Nikolai and Shura? Of course, one cannot, just because one is far away from the homeland, avert one's eyes from the tragedy. One must do whatever possible to oppose the war, even if this may incur savage reprisals. It is your duty to us. Take courage, friends, and do not forget that you are not alone; there's us too, defectors and prisoners; we are many, we are of different nationalities, of different faiths, but we are in captivity, while you are in freedom. So act!

Salkazanova: And, finally, the last question that I put to Vladislav Naumov, a former Soviet serviceman who last fall went over to the side of the fighters of the Afghan liberation move-



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ment. What would you like to broadcast to your relatives in the Soviet Union and what would you like to say to young Soviet draftees?

Naumov: We would like to address ourselves to those people who know us well. Don't worry about us, there is no need to be over-sentimental; we have not betrayed you, and we will never forget you. It may happen that we have to die or go away to a distant foreign country. Don't think badly of us. As long as we live, we are with you body and soul. My dear young friends, if you have to come to Afghanistan, don't forget one thing--that is impossible to make war on an entire people. These are not my words, they are the words of a soldier prisoner of war. I am not calling on you to go over to the side of the insurgents or to go the the Free World. The only thing I do beg of you is to refuse to commit crimes. I would also like to address the mothers whose sons have fallen or are missing in the mountains of a foreign land. I am not going to try to reassure you: raise your heads, say your say, tell as much as you can about the unjust war, say just that your children died in Afghanistan.